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PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLN RUEHLZ
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P 211208Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0320
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3420
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1238
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1105
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1674
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2253

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000261

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: EFFECTS OF DEEP FREEZE LINGER IN
EAST

REF: A. ASHGABAT 0225

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 0139

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (SBU) A February 20 visit by EmbOff to Turkmenabat, Turkmenistan's second largest city, revealed that the area is still suffering the after-effects of the freezing-cold winter that gripped the country in January and early February. City Mayor Yazgeldi Annayev told us that the temperature averaged -20C during the cold snap, leading to 15cm-thick ice to form on the nearby Amu Darya River. Now, he said, ice on the river is only 6cm thick. (NOTE: EmbOff drove near the river on the outskirts of town, and it appeared as if much of it had melted. END NOTE.) Annayev said that his area had received "technological" help from the Lebap provincial government as well as from other provinces to help break up the ice, following the January 19 inspection visit by President Berdimuhamedov. (NOTE: According to DAO military sources, Turkmen military fired mortars and engineers used plastic explosives to break up the ice. END NOTE.)

[1](#)3. (SBU) Annayev insisted that there would be no flooding due to the steps taken to break up the ice. Nevertheless, not everyone is so certain (Ref. A). A visiting delegation from NATO's Civil Emergency Planning Division told us February 18 that the possibility of flooding came up in their discussion with Deputy Defense Minister Atabayev. Atabayev had asked the NATO officials about providing assistance in dealing with floods and mudslides, specifically asking if using explosives like dynamite is the best way of breaking up ice. Atabayev said that he was interested in knowing how other nations handle such problems.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Although the weather has warmed in Turkmenabat, residents remain without water. Residents told EmbOff that pipes froze because of the cold weather and are damaged. As a consequence, there is no running water in Turkmenabat. Residents must bring in water from elsewhere or use bottled water for all necessities. They had no idea when the problem would be completely remedied, but assumed there would no be

change until spring.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: The mayor was the only person we encountered who was sanguine about the possibility of flooding. Nevertheless, residents were more concerned about immediate problem of the lack of running water rather than the still (somewhat) distant possibility of flooding. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND